

International Prize for DDG/TB

1579. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that DDG/TB was awarded an international prize; and
- (b) if so, the special achievements for which the DDG/TB has been awarded the international prize?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It was for his contributions to the fight against Tuberculosis in India in his capacity as Programme Manager of the national TB Control Programme in this country.

National Health Programme on Blindness in Tamil Nadu

1580. SHRI S. AGNIRAJ: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government are planning to implement National Health Programme on Blindness in Tamil Nadu;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps taken to improve the public awareness of blindness in the State; and
- (d) the total number of blind persons in Tamil Nadu as of last year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) and (b) National Programme for Control of Blindness is being implemented throughout the country including Tamil Nadu since 1976. A World Bank Assisted Cataract Blindness Control Project is also being implemented in Tamil Nadu since 1994 under which financial assistance is being provided by Government of India as 100% grants for construction of Operation Theaters, supply of equipments, training of personnel, Grant-in-aid to NGOs etc.

(c) To increase public awareness about Prevention and Control of Blindness, awareness campaigns are being carried out through Television, radio, print media. In addition, organisation of screening camps through NGOs are being carried out.

(d) Recent survey in Sivagangai district of Tamil Nadu indicated a prevalence level of blindness 0.98% in the State. Based on the survey, it is estimated that there are about 6.3 lakhs blind persons in the State.

News-item, "Lakhs being Fed Genetically Modified Food"

1581. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned, "Lakhs being fed genetically modified food" which appeared in the Times of India, dated 5th May, 2001;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that about 800,000 women and children have been consuming for almost 10 years genetically modified food under Government nutrition programme Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) Scheme, received from CARE India, an international, NGO; and

(c) the steps taken to find out effect of such food on the consumers and to prevent such food items coming in?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As per the information received from the Department of Women and Child Development more than 72 lakhs beneficiaries comprising children below six years and pregnant and lactating mothers are being given food-aid in terms of Corn Soya Blend and Refined Vegetable Oil supplied by CARE, an International Voluntary Organisation and that Corn and Soya Blend commercially produced in US including those produced through biotechnology are understood to be not commonly segregated for commercial domestic sale or for export.

However, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has informed that the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), a statutory body set up under the Environment Protection Act, administered by the Ministry of Environment and Forests for allowing the manufacture, Use, Import, Export and storage of Genetically modified organisms, after undertaking their biosafety assessment has not accorded approval for import of any genetically modified food in the country. Molecular probes and analytical methods for detecting, genetically Engineered ingredients in food are currently not available in the country.